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Support by the United Nations System of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Human rights questions

Letter dated 29 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Hungarian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the statement by the Committee of Ministers on the Council of Europe's contribution to political and democratic stability in south-eastern Europe.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 39, 112 and 117 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) André **Erdös**
Ambassador

* A/54/50.

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Council's contribution to political and democratic stability in south-eastern Europe, issued at Strasbourg, France, on 26 April 1999

1. The conflict related to Kosovo creates dramatic challenges for Europe: all democratic forces must unite to ensure the restoration of peace, full respect for human rights and the rule of law. The Council of Europe declares its readiness to contribute to the search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict and stability in the region and to redress human suffering and institutional damage. The Council of Europe will bring its statutory competence as an organization for democratic States all over Europe and its institutional and operational resources fully to bear in the search for a new future in the region. It is prepared to participate, in the present efforts towards the restoration of democratic stability in the region, on the basis of its specific responsibility. The Council of Europe can provide a proper European perspective on the necessary cooperation between the countries of the region and their close neighbours.

2. At present, the Council of Europe — including the Social Development Fund — is involved in coping with the most urgent needs of the refugees and displaced persons from Kosovo as well as all the other civilian victims affected by the conflict. These efforts, which are conducted by the Council of Europe within the field of its competence, in close collaboration with other international and regional organizations, include, in particular:

- Assistance in preparing for the return of these persons, mainly by providing them with identity documents;
- Assistance in the assessment of human rights violations suffered by the people in the region and recommending appropriate action;
- Contributing to post-traumatic psychological treatment projects for vulnerable groups among the refugees and displaced persons and all the other civilian victims, in particular children and women, as well as access to adequate health care;
- Assistance to children and young people in the setting up of flexible educational and cultural infrastructures in their temporary environment;
- In the form of a donation of 2 million euros, as an exceptional measure, from the Social Development Fund's Selective Trust Account in favour of refugees and displaced persons from Kosovo.

3. In the medium term, the Council of Europe's specific projects aim at:

- Redressing the human rights situation and the return of refugees and displaced persons;
- Contributing to the re-establishment and stabilization of democratic constitutional and institutional frameworks;
- Developing a culture of democratic citizenship, confidence-building, civil society and independent media;
- Promoting culture and education in an intercultural perspective.

For these purposes, the Council of Europe will make use of the full range of its working methods, which include political dialogue and consultation, expert advice, the secondment

of experts, training and information and awareness-raising activities. The Council of Europe will implement its projects in close contact with the authorities and civil society in the region and direct cooperation with other international organizations in its fields of competence — the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations, with its specialized agencies — putting emphasis also on regional cooperation structures, such as the South-Eastern European Cooperation process, the Central European Initiative and the Royaumont process.

4. The overall long-term aim of the Council of Europe is to bring each and every country in Europe to the point of accepting and living up to the principles of pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Council of Europe is open to membership of all the countries in the region on the basis of these principles.

5. The Council of Europe will continue to make its contribution to the preparation, conclusion and implementation of a stability pact for south-eastern Europe, in close contact with the countries of the region and in partnership with the other institutions and organizations active in this field.

6. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the efforts and initiatives taken individually by member countries of the Council of Europe and through regional cooperation, aimed at reaching the goals set forth in this statement.